

6/12/2006

**EMERGENCY SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS ACT
FOR DEFENSE,
THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERROR, AND HURRICANE
RECOVERY, 2006**

**HON. DAVID R. OBEY
OF WISCONSIN
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
JUNE 12, 2006**

Mr. Speaker, this event is a sad day in the history of the House and the country. The fact that this bill is before us today indicates that the President's aim is about as faulty as the Vice-President's.

The fact is that on 9/11 we were attacked by al Qaeda. They were sheltered by the

Taliban in Afghanistan. The President correctly responded to that by going after al Qaeda in Afghanistan. But then he slipped off the track and diverted his attention and the country's to an unnecessary war in Iraq against a government that had nothing whatsoever to do with the attack against the United States on 9/11.

We have now spent, in 18 separate actions, \$450 billion on this adventure, when you take into account what will be provided in the defense appropriations bill which will be considered by the full Appropriations Committee tomorrow.

Now, my objection to the way this war is being funded is based primarily on my belief

that the country and the Congress has a right to know what the cost of this war is and what we think future costs will be. But because the requests to finance this war have come in the form of supplementals outside the regular appropriation process, the actual cost of the war has effectively been hidden because the administration's plan was to reveal that cost to the American people on the installment plan.

So a little bit at a time they get to understand what the cost is going to be. \$50 billion here, \$50 billion there, as Senator Edward Dirksen said, "Sooner or later that amounts to real money." This is a huge expenditure for a misguided war, in my view.

Mr. Speaker, I would make one

other point. My second concern about this bill is not directed at what the bill does contain, but rather what this bill does not contain. The Senate adopted a separate amendment, the Byrd-Gregg amendment, which would have added \$2.5 billion in additional funding for border security and port security.

Unfortunately, the conferees chose to eliminate that funding

from the bill. That means that they did not provide the \$1.9 billion that the Senate had asked us to provide to do things such as replace out-dated aircraft. The P-3 fleet, which serves as border security's primary air surveillance mechanism, is over 40 years old, 20 years beyond the average life of that type of plane. The entire fleet needs to be overhauled to extend the service life. This bill does not measure up to that.

We also have nearly 1,700 vehicles which are unusable due to wear and tear because of the environment, the extreme burden that that environment places on Border Patrol agents' equipment and vehicles. This bill does not provide funding for that.

This bill lacks sufficient patrol

aircraft. It lacks sufficient funding for armed helicopters on the border. Also, in addition, I believe the Congress should have provided \$648 million in additional port security improvements.

The Coast Guard has only 34 inspectors to review security plans at foreign ports. We should have provided \$180 million more for customs and

border protection, including \$80 million for Border Patrol vehicle replacement, and \$100 million more for border infrastructure and technology.

We should have provided \$50 million more for an upgrade of law enforcement communications. We should have provided \$80 million the Senate requested for Immigration and Customs

Enforcement vehicle replacement.

We should have provided the amount that the Senate requested, \$227 million, for additional port security grants.

The Senate also asked us to provide \$211 million in additional funds for rail and seaport inspection equipment.

It asked us to provide \$132 million more for radiation portal monitors to accelerate deployment to screen 100 percent of in-bound containers.

Alas, this bill contains none of those items. So I think it is grossly deficient in meeting the needs of border security and port security. I regret that. But unfortunately I cannot do much about it because the majority

party was determined to exclude these items.

I was also stunned by the fact that the majority party refused to adopt, or refused to retain, the language that was adopted on the House floor which made clear that the United States had no intention of entering into permanent basing rights agreements in Iraq.

Certainly I recognize that some Members of this House do not want us to leave Iraq anytime soon, but somewhere between leaving immediately and staying forever, we ought to be able to find common ground.

